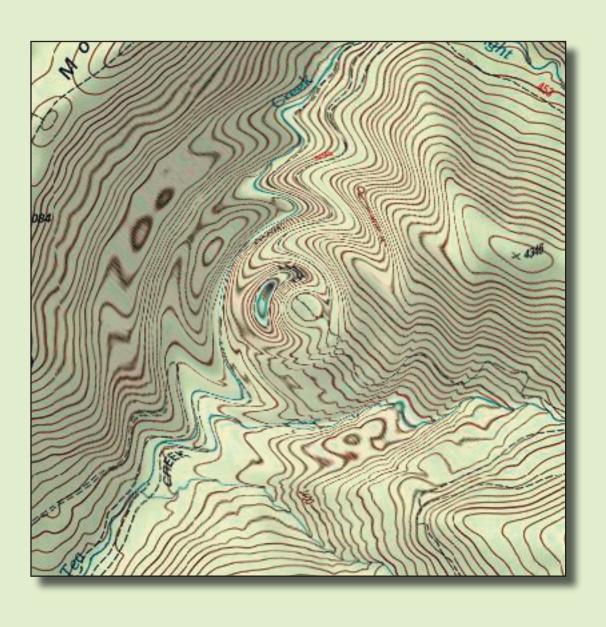
# Some Curious Notions Regarding Topography

for Concert Band, Piano, Free Drummer, Improvisatory Bassist and Conducted Improvisation

Barry R. Morse



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September 13, 2014 Urbana, Illinois

#### Instrumentation

#### High Woodwinds (HW)

C Flutes

C Piccolos

**Eb Clarinets** 

**Bb** Clarinets

Oboes

#### Low Woodwinds (LW)

Horns

**English Horns** 

Bb Tenor Saxophones

Eb Baritone Saxophones

**Bb Bass Clarinets** 

Bassoons

Contrabassoons

#### High Brass (HB)

**Eb Trumpets** 

C Trumpets

**Bb** Trumpets

Bb Soprano Saxophones

Eb Alto Saxophones

#### Low Brass (LB)

Tenor Trombones Bass Trombones Euphoniums Tubas

Piano

#### 4 Percussionists:

- 1. Access to piano (above) or separate piano, xylophone, flexatone, slapstick, vibraslap, tam-tam, any kind of metal, wood, and hand percussion
- 2. Celesta, vibraphone, bongos (2), chimes, any kind of metal, wood and hand percussion,
- 3. Electronic keyboard (organ patch), marimba, rototoms (3-HML), metal, wood and hand percussion
- 4. Access to electronic keyboard (above) or separate keyboard, glockenspiel, bass drum, large suspend ed cymbal, metal, wood, and hand percussion

#### Drum set/Free drummer

The drummer must be comfortable with "free" improvisational drumming. This is drumming that may be fast or slow, loud or soft but which avoids regular patterns and styles while keeping a some what constant pulse (at least for this piece). Improvisational drummers use the entire instrument as well as "toys" that may be attached to the set. While working largely independently of the conductor and other players (in this piece) drummer should be sensitive to dynamics and general style. Excellent examples of "free drumming" are videos of Hamid Drake and Billy Higgins.

#### Double bass/Free improvisational bassist:

An upright string bass is required with a "jazz" style player using jazz-style *pizzicato*. Amplification will be necessary, but electric bass guitar should be avoided. Bass player will essentially be "comping" a "walking bass" line using notated patterns and pitch sets with improvisation in and around such given patterns.

#### General Performance Notes

The **score** to *Some Curious Notions Regarding Topography* is transposed. All players read directly from the score, playing the notes as they see them for their instrument *without transposing*. This will result in parallel chords of seconds, fifths, major sixths, etc. when, for example, Bb, C and Eb trumpets play the same notated pitches as Horns and Eb alto saxophones. C flutes and Bb clarinets will be in very close harmony (major seconds) while the Low Brass will be mostly in octaves.

Where specific **instruments** in any group are not indicated, good judgement should be used by players and/or conductor. For example, tubas, contrabassoons, etc. would obviously be best suited to play the lowest available pitches. Players are otherwise free to choose any comfortable octave. Balance considerations may decide how many of an instrument, such as Eb, C and Bb trumpets, are to be used or where piccolos, for example, may need to play lower octaves or not play at all. Conductor and players are encouraged to make such pre-performance adjustments.

The **conductor** is required in some sections to conduct the entire ensemble normally (metered sections). Sometimes some groups are conducted normally while other groups are proceeding independently of the conductor and other players (C). At other times the conductor is using "new" techniques to direct the ensemble in very free sections such as at A, C and D. In this way (sometimes called "conduction" or "conducted improvisation") the conductor becomes an active performer and co-creator of form and effects while interacting in a more immediate way with performers at the time of performance. Such free sections should result spontaneously and never be pre-determined in rehearsals.

**Movements** should be played *attacca*, with little to no pause between if the composition is performed in its entirety. Individual movements, however, may be excerpted and developed as full-fledged performances if the conductor so wishes.

Some **tempos** in F may seem fast (MM=144), but this is merely to be strived for and a slower tempo may be used if the feeling is not heavy and ponderous.

**Duration** is largely determined by the conductor. While metered sections are generally short, the open A, C, D and E sections are intended to be much lengthier, allowing time for the guided improvisations to create their own form. Good taste, a sense of timing and the skills and willingness of the ensemble to relax into the style will help to determine the duration of such sections. Nevertheless, **minimum duration** should be around **8'15."** 

### Specific Performance Notes and Strategies

The music for rehearsal letters  $A_1$  through  $A_3$  should be read with the score fully open in a "gatefold" manner such that conductor and players read pages 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6 as three (3) wide pages and not as six (6) separate pages, thus the music procedes from page 1 directly to page 2 as if these were one (1) page of music.

 $A_1$  is not conducted except that individual players are cued in/out at conductor's discretion. Each player proceeds with own timing independent of others and repeats until cued out. Conductor is free to shape dynamics and thickness of texture by adding any/all/no additional parts or players on the same part who, nevertheless play independently. Conductor cues next section at  $A_2$ .

**Drum set/free drummer:** On cue free drummer plays "coloristic" effects (non-standard patterns or "licks") on any item except drums (cymbals, cymbal stands, junk, "toys," etc.) using silence and musical sensitivity. Conductor is free to increase/decrease activity and volume using hand signals at his/her discretion.

A<sub>2</sub> uses soloists and ensemble players and a new method of conducting called "scrub" conducting. Soloist(s): Player(s) cued by conductor play through pitch series at own pace, in as "musical" a manner as possible, creating their own motives and patterns, being sensitive to phrasing, dynamics, articulations, etc. Pitches need not be taken in strict order but merely serve as a guide to improvisation. Soloist(s) are not subject to conductor's "scrub mode" (see below) and should otherwise ignore the ensemble. Repeat series as needed.

<u>Strategy:</u> Conductor cues player(s) at any time to play or to stop. Conductor may change players at any time and may suggest, through gesture, dynamics for balance reasons or even tempo. Multiple simultaneous soloists may occur, (in same or different keys) as well as only one or none.

#### **Ensemble**:

**Winds (HW/LW/HB/LB): "Solo mode:"** On cue one player from each group plays material on pages 3 to 4 (which represent a continuous phrase) at own pace (slowly) and very softly, repeating as needed, and using solo-istic effects, extended techniques, inflections and minor variations. Since each individual is moving at his/her own pace, the parts will not be coordinated. Only in "scrub mode" do all players start and follow along together.

"Scrub mode" (see below): On cue all players in an active group start at begining of phrase and play proportionally to length of conductor's horizontal arm sweep, where the dotted bar line represents the farthest point to the Left (from performers' view) and the remainder of the phrase (p.4) is proportional to conductor's return sweep to Right. Sweep may be very fast in which case players will certainly not be together. This "sloppiness" is perfectly acceptable, but everyone should try to remain as close together and with conductor as possible. Volume should be loud. This effect should be as of a wall of noise.

<u>Strategy:</u> Conductor begins the piece by cuing any group's individual or the soloists to start and proceed on own in "Solo mode" (above). Not all groups or players need to be used and conductor may change texture at any time by cuing out players and/or adding new ones. To create sudden rushes of noise, conductor employs "scrub mode conducting." On cue, conductor sweeps Right arm horizontally from his/her far Left to far Right and back again, as all players of active groups play their phrase (which spans pages 3 and 4) proportionally to sweep. On cue, individuals may return to quiet and slow "solo mode." Additionally, if conductor stops his/her sweep at any point, players who happen to be at a similar point in the phrase will hold their note (if playing one), until conductor's sweep moves on.

**Drum set/free drummer:** On cue play freely and very actively on set, adding drums. Avoid patterns and especially stylistic cliches such as rock beats or swing feel. Use silence and dramatic pacing and always be musically sensitive. Play in "solo mode" (above) and ignore "scrub conducting."

<u>Strategy:</u> Conductor may cue free drummer at any time to begin or stop, or to adjust tempo, dynamics etc. using hand signals.

 $A_3$  is similar to the previous section in that there are soloists, ensemble members in solo mode and unison ensemble in scrub mode.

 $A_4$  is conducted normally, in tempo as a transition to B. H/LW may play the bars in any order, not with others but in tempo with conductor. HW begin only with C instruments and add Bb and Eb instruments where indicated. The effect should be of increasing chaos to B which suddenly backs off in volume and dissonance.

 $B_1$  Instrument key letters (Bb, C, Eb etc.) above a phrase indicate that among that group only those instruments in that key are to play, until next indicated. For example, where C appears above notation for HW, only flutes/piccolos and oboes, all in C, are to play; Bb and Eb clarinets are tacet. Where "All players" is notated, every player in a group, no matter what key, is to play, creating built-in harmonies.

 $C_2$  Soloist(s): On cue player(s) play through given music or use motives to construct one's own improvisation. Rest, vary, inflect *ad lib*. Not necessarily to be synchronized to any other player or rhythm section.

Strategy: Free drumming and bass continue from previous section. Soloist(s) are cued to enter and eventually to stop. Soloists may be sequential or simultaneous. The more players working individually, the denser the texture. The conductor may want to play with this idea. In addition, background figures can be cued from the given material in boxes. Conductor should first indicate who is to play, give hand signals for length, dynamic, and in the case of percussion, which type of instrument (keyboard/mallet/metal/wood/hand). Then on cue execute the event. Different events can be linked as if one triggers the next as long as all indications are pre-set before carrying out on cues. By repetition of events and thoughtful yet spontaneous cuing of soloists, different forms can be created in performance. Players will obviously have to be well acquainted with the music and the conductor's hand signals, but pre-arranged and rehearsed patterns should never take place: this is a system for live, on-the-fly performance.

 $D_1$  Ensemble: All active players in all keys follow conductor's upward arm movement while playing chromatic and/or diatonic upward patterns and rolls proportionally to position of arm. Upward patterns are notated on upper system. When highest point on arc is reached (1/4, 1/2, 3/4 etc.) players follow dotted arrow to position on lower system to begin downward scales/rolls, etc. Optional notes are included to discourage perfect synchronization as each player moves faster or slower against others to keep up with conductor's arm.

Strategy: Conductor makes wide arc with Right arm from bottom/start (arm straight down) to top (arm straight up) and back again. Depending upon how high on the arc the arm is raised, the upward scale will rise. The return motion is always to the bottom of the scale. Conductor should vary both the height and speed of the arm motion to keep players on their toes, encouraging a certain acceptable amount of chaos and to create "hills" and "valleys." When conductor "goes over the top" of the arc events on the next page take place.

 $D_2$  HW/Perc 1,2/DmSet: When conductor crosses over to Right side (as viewed from players) these players follow downward arc stopping at spot in music corresponding to hand position on arc. Entire process from  $D_1$  may be repeated.

<u>Strategy:</u> Conductor should create drama by keeping listeners unsure of when the "hills" on page 10 will tip over into the falling figures on page 11. This up-down-falling process can continue as long as the effect is interesting. To end the event, conductor should complete the last falling figure on p.15 by bringing arm straight down with players playing last bar *molto rit*. On cue, players proceed to E.

 $E_1$  is a fugue-like section with players cued as soloists to enter and play through the passage one time each. Melodic material is for all wind, brass, keyboard and mallet percussion and double bass, and rhythmic material is for non-pitched percussion and free drummer.

<u>Strategy:</u> Conductor builds the texture and form by overlapping players in the same key, different keys, changing key areas, in rapid succession or widely spaced, and/or different instrumental groups and by allowing pitched material to play itself out in favor of purely rhythmic material (or *vice versa*) on Hand/Metal/Wood percussion instruments cued at the moment using hand signals. Conductor also controls the dynamics and should feel free to indicate to the free drummer to improvise around the given patterns.

 $E_2$  is a percussion transition to F of indefinite length.

<u>Strategy:</u> Conductor may bring in all percussionists and free drummer at once as a contrast to  $E_1$  or introduce them separately as a continuation of  $E_1$ . Conductor may choose to play with the texture here, as well, by thinning and thickening the number of players, activity level and dynamics while "vamping" in tempo. On cue, players play any 3+3+2 pattern until ensemble cue for F.

#### Hand Signals

Conductor and players should become fluent in the use and understanding of these signals. Conductor is free to alter or substitute his/her own prefered signals as well as adding any that may have been overlooked that would prove useful. Some of these signals and much of the inspiration for this composition are due to having briefly worked with Mr. Adam Rudolph, composer and director of the *Go: Organic Orchestra* and Mr. Tatsuya Nakatani director of the *Nakatani Gong Orchestra*. Any short-comings of this piece are entirely my own and do not reflect upon Mr. Rudolph or Mr. Nakatani in any way.

1.freely improvised solo Conductor tugs on his/her ear

2. start Point to player

3. stop Palm outward in "stop" gesture

4. short note Hold index finger and thumb close together but not touching

5. long note Hold index finger and thumb far apart

6. trill Up-down "trilling" motion with index finger

7. loud Palm up to sky

8. soft Palm down to floor

9. wood percussion instrument Hold three fingers up in "W" shape

10. metal percussion instrument Hold three fingers down in "M" shape

11. mallet percussion instrument Make motion with both hands as if holding mallets

12. keyboard instrument Run fingers up-down imaginery keyboard

13. hand percussion instrument Pat hands as if tapping conga

14. High Woodwinds Point up, wiggle fingers as if playing flute

15. Low Woodwinds Point down, wiggle fingers as if playing flute

16. High Brass Point up, wiggle fingers in front of face as if playing trumpet

17. Low Brass Point down, wiggle fingers in front of face as if playing trumpet

18. Piano Point to piano player, run fingers up-down imaginery keyboard

19. More space/rest/silence Fingertips of both hands touching, pull hands apart

20. Less space/more activity Hold index finger horizontally and roll

21. Tempo increase Conductor tap own temple, point up with thumb

22. Tempo decrease Conductor tap own temple, point down with thumb

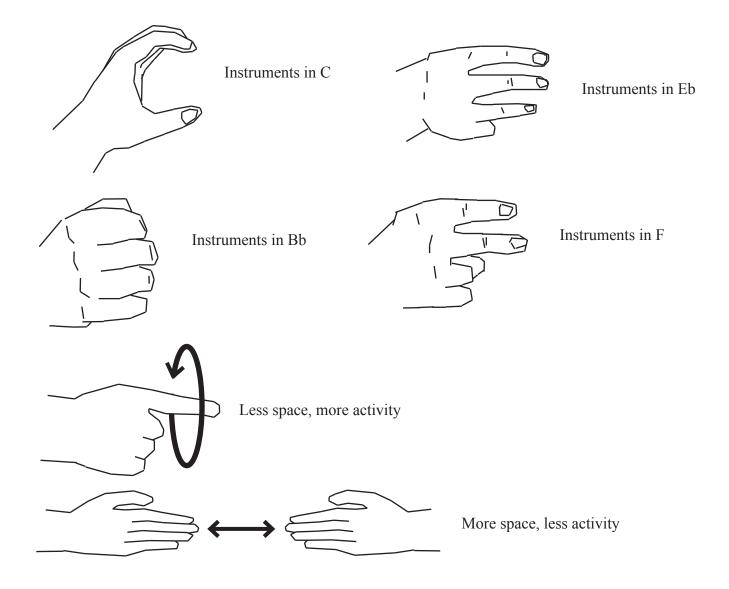
23. Instruments in C Make curve with right hand like letter "C"

24. Instruments in Eb Hold three fingers of right hand like letter "E"

25. Instruments in Bb Hold knuckles of right hand in front of body pointing left

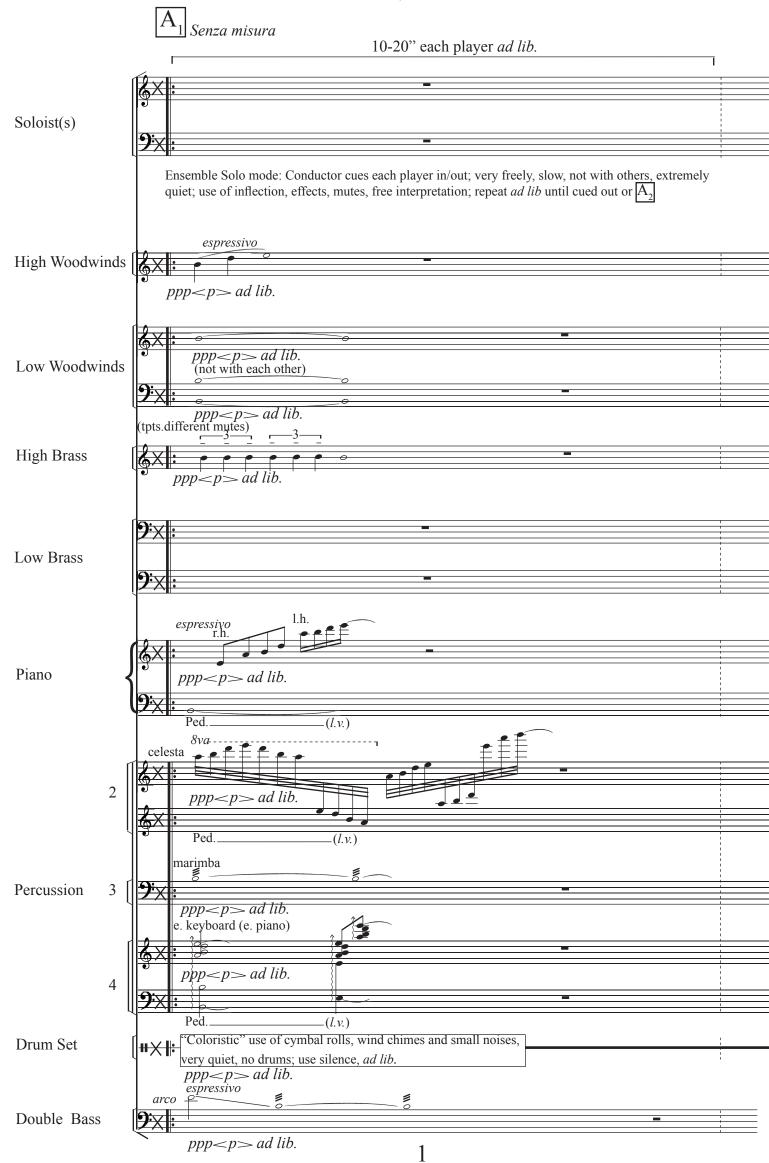
26. Instruments in F Hold two fingers of right hand pointing left like letter "F"

27. Percussion patterns in 3, 5, 7 Tap forearm with 3, 5 or 5 then 2 fingers



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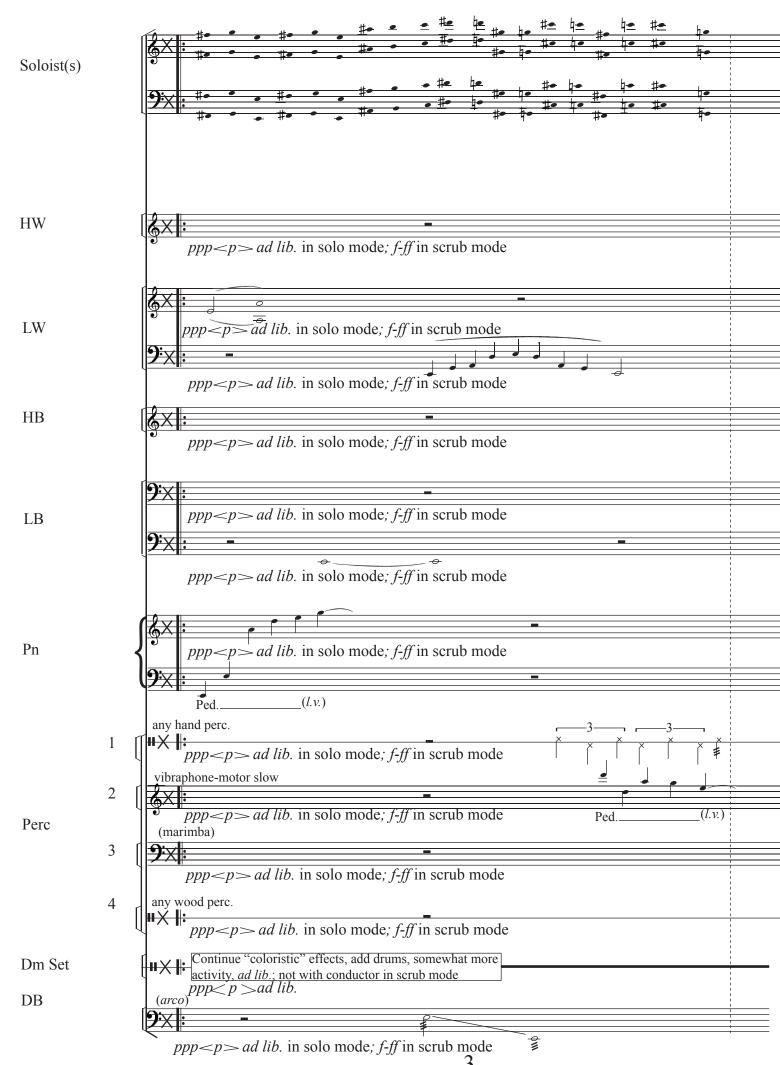
I.



sim. (Ped.)\_

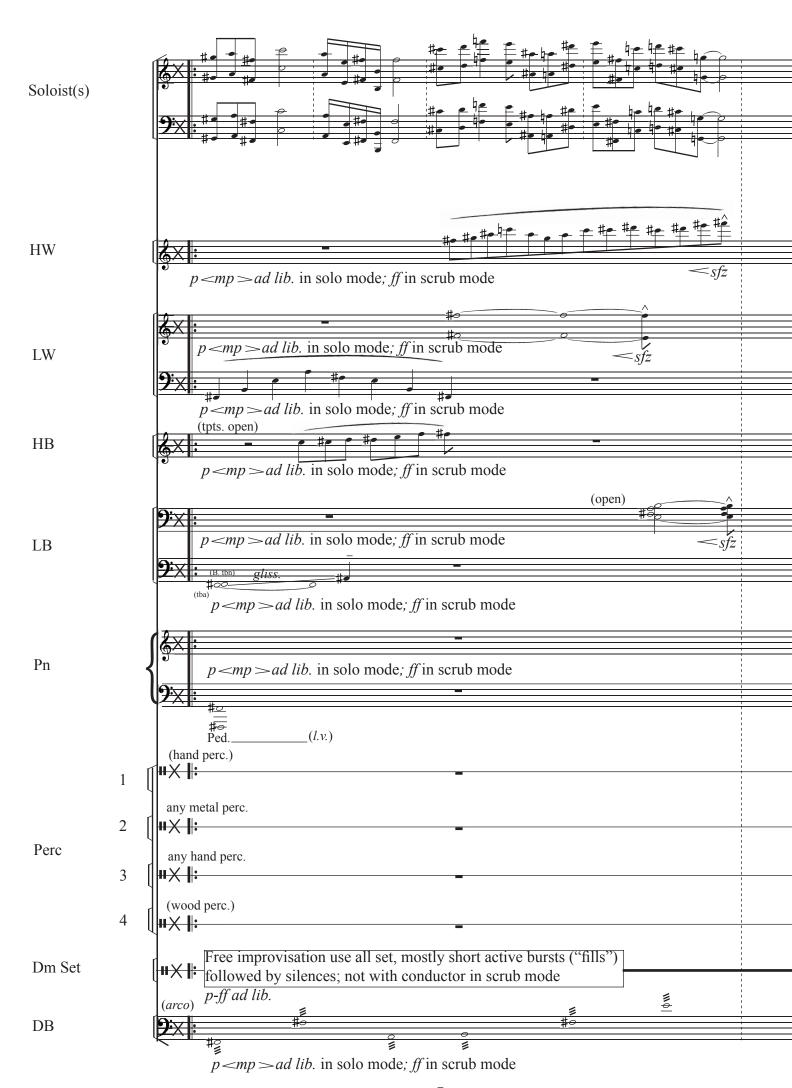


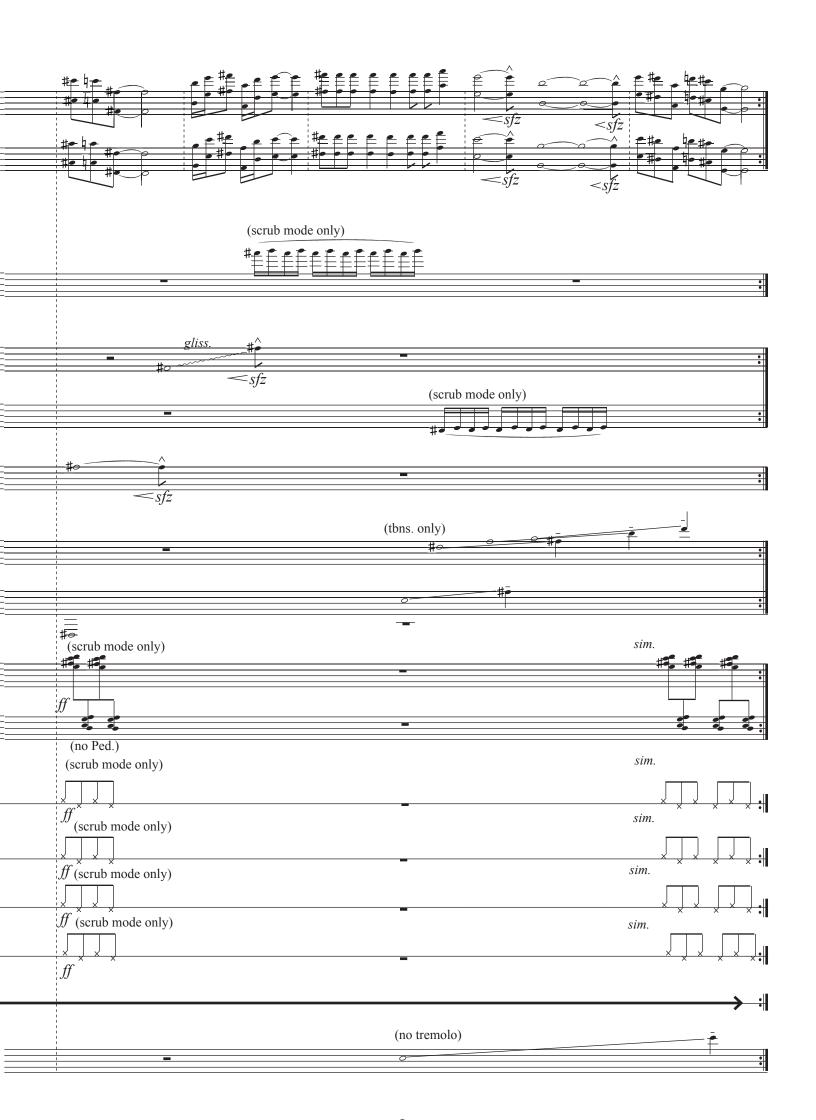
Soloist(s) On Cue: All parameters, including tempo, repetition, octave and rests *ad lib.*, not with Conductor even in scrub mode





## $A_3$





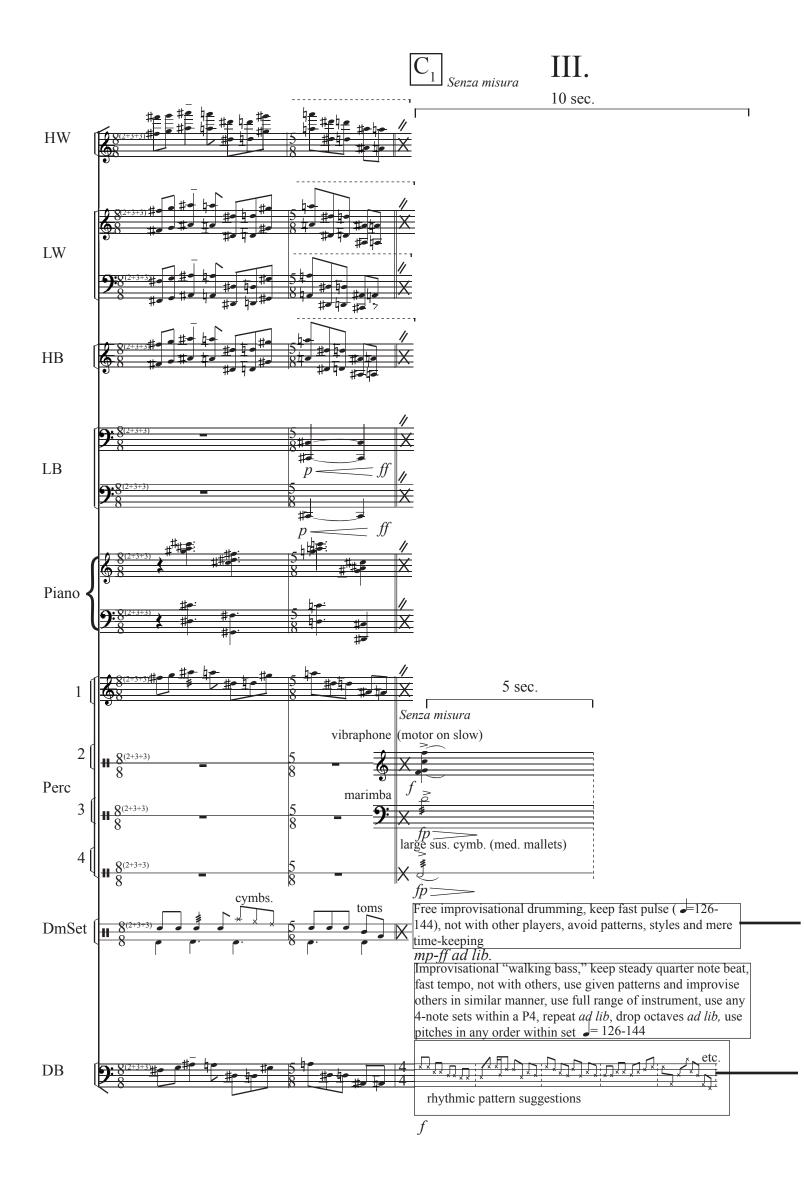




 $B_2$ HWLW НВ All players LB Piano Perc DmSet bend

DB



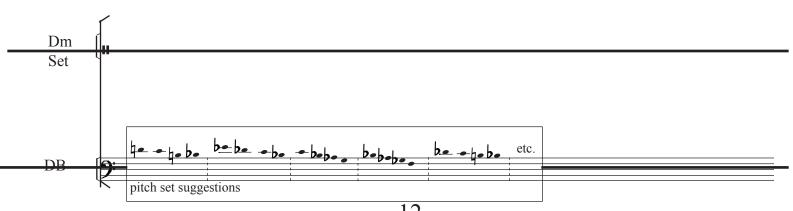


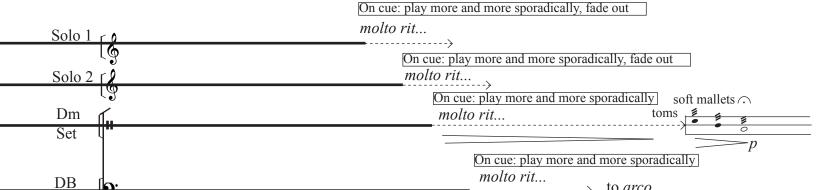
Solo 1 On cue: any player, play figures in any order, rest, repeat, free variation *ad lib.*, J = 100-120 not necessarily with drums/bass or other players



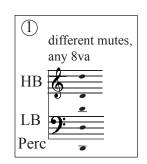
 $Solo\ 2\ O\!\!\!/ n\ cue: any\ player,\ play\ figures\ in\ any\ order,\ rest,\ repeat,\ free\ variation\ \it{ad\ lib.},$ J = 84-104 not necessarily with drums/bass or other players

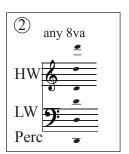


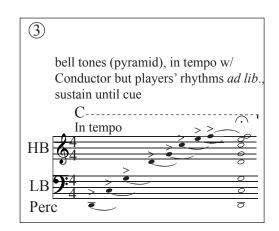


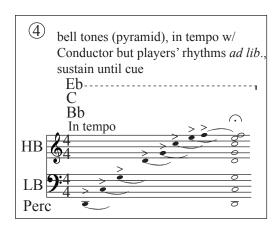


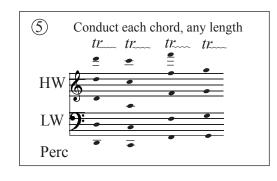
Background figures on cue (watch Conductor for lengths, dynamics, instruments, etc.)

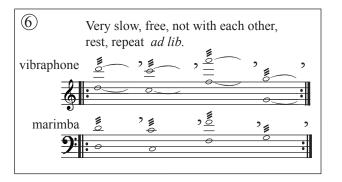


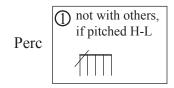


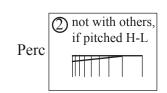


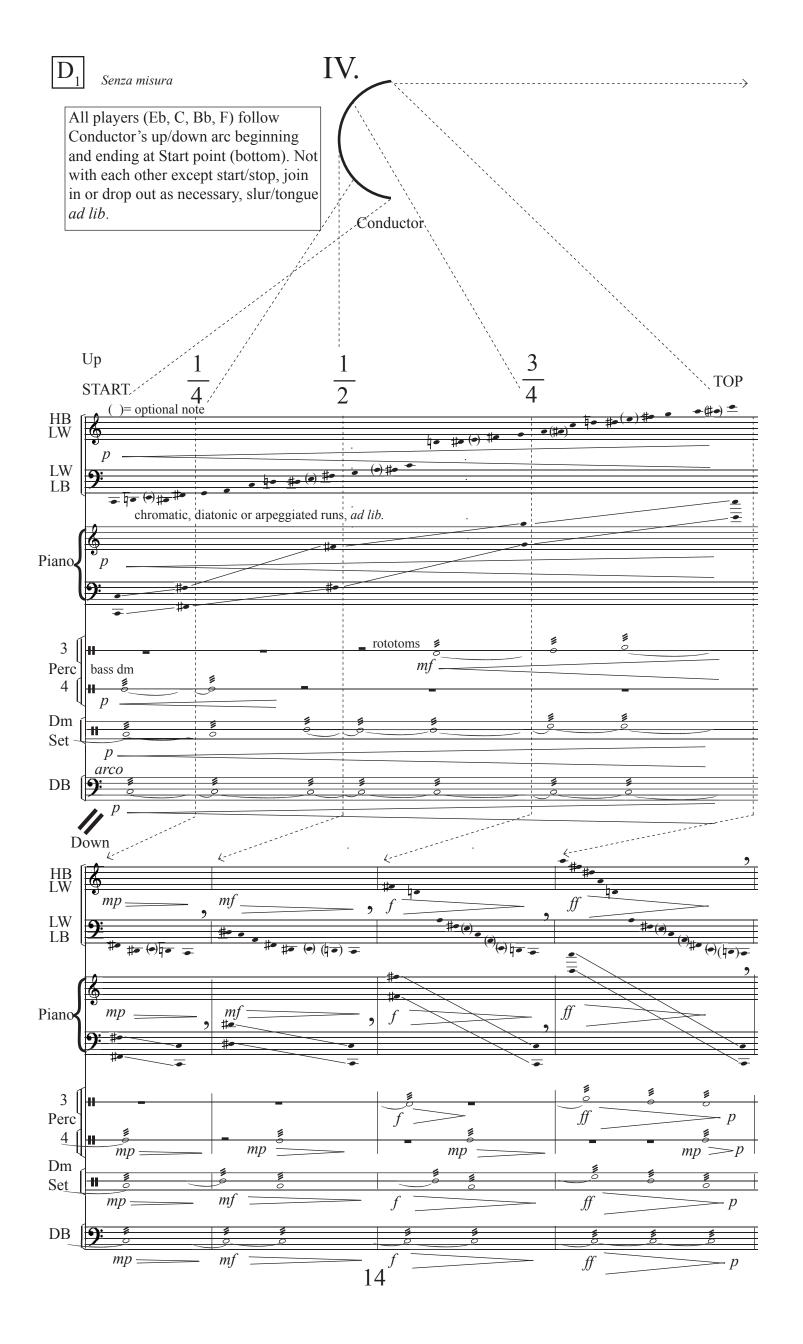


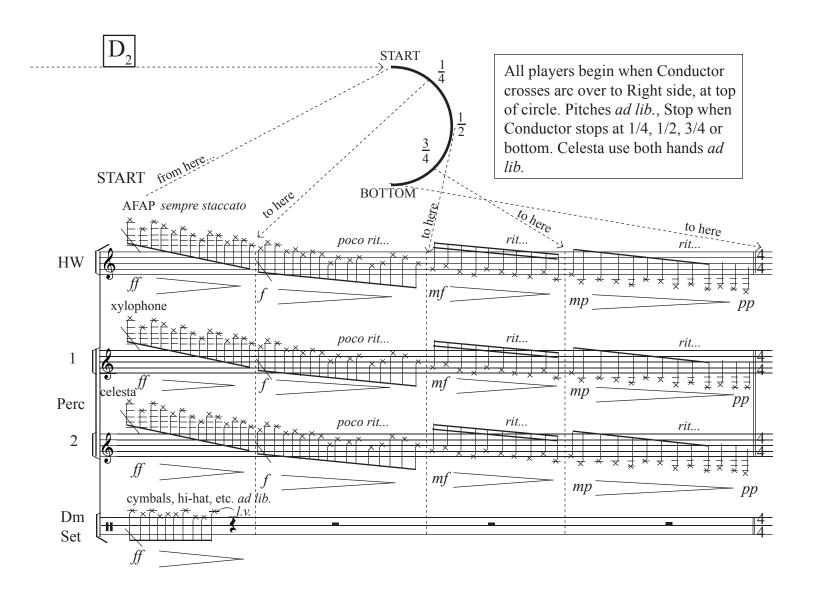










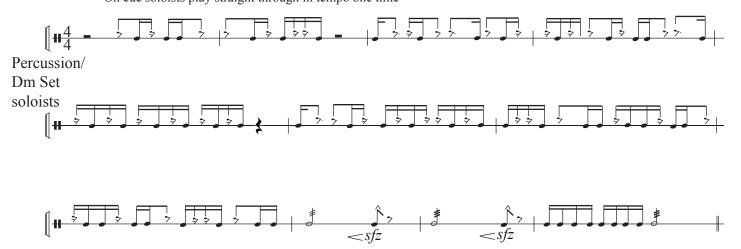




On cue soloists play straight through in tempo one time

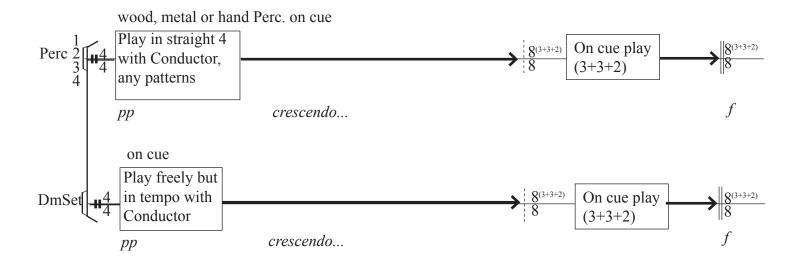


On cue soloists play straight through in tempo one time



 $E_2$  Tempo J=112 vamp ad lib.; accelerando...

vamp until cue for F



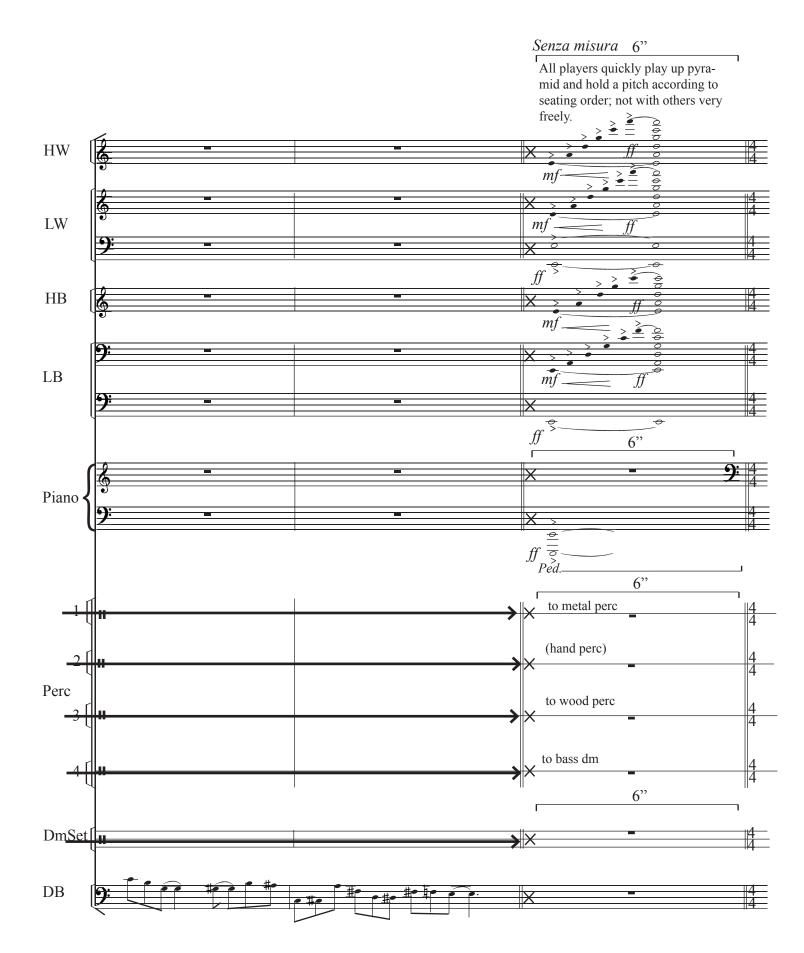




















 $\overline{F_7}$ All players HWAll players LW *f*All players All players HBAll players LB Piano swing/bop, freely in tempo DmSet H pizz. swing/bop rhythm, random pitches freely in tempo DB HW LW HB LB Piano. Perc  $1 \left[ \frac{8^{(3+3+2)}}{8} \right]$ flexatone DmSet H

28

DB









DB

